2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

him about the laws it intends to introduce which affect his people. The Administration transmits new Ordinances and Regulations to the chief and he must then relay them to the village headmen. When it advises the chief of a new law it thereby advises the people of his chiefdom.

The Origin of Villages in Modern Chiefdoms

We have thus far been looking at the chiefdom as an organization of villages united by their common interests in and association with one chief. But the villages that compose the chiefdom are not all equally closely integrated into the political structure. This is most clearly seen against the background of how the modern chiefdoms came into being.

By the time that the 1912 Ordinance was introduced the social composition of the chiefdoms had undergone some change from what it was before the White conquest. Before the White conquest the Yao chiefs had overcome the indigenous inhabitants of Southern Nyasaland. Some of these had been allowed to remain in the area as subjects. Others were enslaved. There were some Nguru, Nyanja and Mpotola village headmen who had come to seek the protection of the Yao chiefs.

During the conquest, the territory was thrown into confusion, and villages fled in abandon from their own into neighbouring chiefdoms both in Southern Nyasaland and Mozambique. When the Administration allowed the chiefs to return, most of the important village headmen and their followers returned with them. Kawinga, for example, was allowed to return, not to Mount Chikala but to the area immediately to the north of it. He brought back with him most of his important headmen who had fled with him to the country of the Mpotola chief Nkanyela, in Mozambique. Jalasi was allowed to return from Portuguese Territory in 1906,[1] not to his mountain fortress Mangoche, but to a smaller hill Sakalwe some miles to the east. He gathered round him a few of his important headmen.

When hostilities ceased, there was a certain amount of internal readjustment. Some villages which had fled to other chiefdoms in the Protectorate started to come back while others stayed behind. To-day there are villages here and there which had left their chiefdoms in the confusion and had then joined their present

[1] District Book, Fort Johnston.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

chiefs. Mpumbe's village, which in 1947 was about 2½ miles from Kawinga's court village Nanyumbu, was originally one of Jalasi's adherents. Mpumbe fled with many others when the British attacked Mangoche in 1896. He went to the place where Lake Amaramba spills into the Lujenda River in Portuguese East Africa. When things seemed more peaceful, Mpumbe did not return to Jalasi's area, but preferred to seek his son Ngongondo, who had fled with a section of the village to Kawinga's area. He found Ngongondo at approximately the present site of the village, and settled with him. Ngongondo later moved eastwards to his present home in the Liwonde area. Both village headmen have achieved a certain amount of prestige in their new chiefdoms. Mpumbe was once a court assessor of Kawinga, and now holds girls' initiation rights. They have lost all touch with their former chief and are most unlikely to return to him.

A considerable number of Kawinga's villages moved into Mposa's and Chamba's areas, when they returned to the Protectorate. Their descendants to-day say that they did so because the soil was better in those areas than in Kawinga's.

Shortly after the British expedition, i.e. between 1896 and 1900, the Portuguese Government launched a punitive campaign against the Africans along the Portuguese–Nyasaland boundary. Many thousands of refugees came pouring into the Protectorate. Most of these were Mpotola and Nguru. The great majority settled where they crossed the boundary, i.e. round Chiuta, and Ngokwe chiefdom arose from some of them. After the Portuguese campaigns ended many other migrants came into the area. All those I questioned gave Portuguese ill-treatment as the reason for their coming across.

During the first decade of the century the movement, as in the initial invasion, was predominantly south-westwards—from Lake Chiuta towards the Shire River and Highlands. Now, however, the movement is gradual. The first movement of a group may bring it just within the boundary. Then the next movement may take it to the south and west deeper into Nyasaland. Some of my village case histories show this. Table III sets out some movements within Kawinga–Liwonde area (except Chiwalo).[1] I asked about the place of origin of all the villages

[1] I use Kawinga–Liwonde area to include the chiefdoms Kawinga, Liwonde, Mposa, Chamba, Ngokwe, Chikweo and Chiwalo.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

TABLE III

MOVEMENT OF VILLAGES WITHIN KAWINGA-LIWONDE AREA

621
175
166

Losers:	*Gainers:* Ngokwe	Chikweo	Kawinga	Liwonde	Mposa	Chamba	Totals
Ngokwe .	—	—	7	2	—	—	9
Chikweo .	—	—	2	—	1	—	3
Kawinga .	—	—	—	27	1	20	48
Liwonde .	—	—	—	—	—	4	4
Mposa .	—	—	—	2	—	9	9
Chamba .	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals .	—	—	—	2	—	—	73 2

Totals above the diagonal represent movements south-westwards. Totals below the diagonal represent movements north-eastwards.

extant in Kawinga's section, which had arrived since the White conquest. My enquiries about the headmen who are recognized by Government were easy, but for those who are not recognized I had to rely on the memories of my informants and I know that many were left out. I am not aware of any bias, but realize that wide generalization from the figures is not safe. A glance at Map II shows that Ngokwe area is the most north-easterly area and Chamba the most south-westerly. The others are intermediate. Of the 75 villages only two had moved counter to this direction, i.e. from Mposa to Liwonde in a north-westerly direction.

I have no measure of the number of villages which have moved entirely out of the Kawinga-Liwonde area, either to other parts of Nyasaland or back to Portuguese East Africa. I have never heard of a village's moving back to Portuguese East Africa, though I have heard of their moving westwards and southwards, and of a few moving northwards.

In Table IV, I set out the origin of villages which have arrived in Kawinga-Liwonde area since the White conquest, and which are still there. This table shows quite clearly, that by far the biggest influx into these areas has been from Portuguese East

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

TABLE IV

ORIGIN OF VILLAGES WHICH HAVE ARRIVED IN THE KAWINGA-LIWONDE AREA SINCE THE WHITE CONQUEST AND ARE STILL THERE

Origin	Ngokwe	Chikweo	Kawinga	Liwonde	Mpeta	Chamba	Total
Northern Areas:							
Fort Johnston . . .	—	—	—	6	—	1	7
Nyambi	—	3	—	1	1	2	7
Jalasi	1	—	10	6	1	3	21
Southern Areas:							
Malemia and Ntumanje	—	—	—	8	7	28	43
Zomba	—	—	—	4	7	4	15
South of Zomba . .	—	—	—	2	1	3	6
Other Nyasaland Areas:	—	—	—	3	—	2	5
Port. E. Africa . . .	13	76	111	37	6	30	273
Unrecorded	—	—	—	2	1	31	34
Total	14	79	121	69	24	104	411

Africa. We have no record of how many villages have been lost to the Southern or Northern area from Kawinga-Liwonde area, so that we cannot evaluate the significance of the gain of 64 villages from Southern areas, and of only 35 from the Northern areas. The density of population in Malemia's area is 268 per square mile, and the average density of the Shire Highlands is about 156·6. It may well be that there is now a movement out of the Shire Highlands into the less densely populated Liwonde-Kawinga area.

THE PRINCIPLE OF PRIMACY

Migration and invasion have been the keynote of Machinga histories: village headmen recount with pride how their ancestors moved into Nyasaland with their bands of slaves and followers. 'The East' is the traditional home of the Yao and even young men who have never been there proudly say, 'We come from the East'. This sentiment is reflected in the belief that the rains from the east are beneficial and give rise to good crops, while the rains from the west are detrimental and cause

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

of sorcery, but the representative takes no part in the proceedings at all; he is outside them and is there merely to see that affairs are conducted fairly.

The Value Attached to the United Village

The third aspect, the dominant theme in all speeches, is the emphasis on the position of the headman as a leader of a corporate group, and his duty to maintain its unity. The chief and the officiating headmen warn the successor about the possibility of conflict in the village. They advise him to settle differences at once lest these should lead to a split in the village. They also warn him that his wife's relationships with her sisters-in-law, living as she is, virilocally,[1] are a danger point and may lead to trouble. The danger from the 'husbands' who are members of other villages and whose loyalties do not lie directly with the new headman is made manifest to him. At Nyenje's ceremony the officiating headman remonstrated with Nyenje's sisters because some had left the village without giving him an opportunity to settle their differences. The frequent references to the danger of sorcery are also references to the fear of the breakdown of the village. The villagers are exhorted to respect the headman and to be obedient to him for the general welfare of the group as a whole. Regularly the image of the tree and its branches is invoked, and it is made clear that the headman is dependent on his people for his rank and status, and they on him for their unity.

The disintegration of a village in Yao eyes is a sad affair and the disruptive forces in it must be very strong before a section leaves it. People who want to leave a village are usually remonstrated with and told not to 'break' it. In the frequent conflicts between the headmen and their younger brothers the arbitrators usually try their utmost to prevent a migration. They always award compensation to the injured party and tell the disputants to live in peace, and not to leave the village. Frequently, however, the leader of the dissident group prefers to refuse the compensation money, which is often as much as £6 or £7, and

[1] i.e. living with her husband's kin. I use 'virilocal' and 'uxorilocal' in preference to the older but ambiguous terms 'patrilocal' and 'matrilocal'. See Richards, 'Some Types of Family Structure amongst the Central Bantu', 208–9.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

strike out with his adherents to found a new village. A sum of £6 or £7 is a considerable amount in everyday Yao life where the annual cash income of the average individual is not much more. The leader of a dissident group is prepared to forgo this wealth to get one foot on to the lowest rung of the political ladder—that is by becoming a village headman.

Obversely there is a great deal of sentiment attached to the idea of a united village. To the Yao way of thinking a village is broken by fighting or death, and these evils are linked by witchcraft beliefs. The association of death and the break-up of the village is brought out clearly by the funeral ablutions of villagers after the burial of one of their number. An important ingredient in the medicine with which the mourners wash themselves after the funeral, is *cikula*. It is the earth from a particular type of termitary which is usually about 12 to 18 inches high, upright and almost cylindrical. The crust is very brittle and it is comparatively easy to chip off a piece. When this is done a mass of internal chambers and passages is revealed. The soldier ants, unlike those of other species that retreat into the darkness of their passages as soon as they are exposed, come into the open daylight and swarm in confusion over the fractured termitary. When I questioned my informant about *cikula*, he kicked the crust off the top of one of the hills and said, 'See all the houses in the village of the ants? I have broken their village. So it is with death. It breaks the village.'

The Yao believe that death 'breaks the village' and that conflicts through sorcery lead to death. Therefore, conflicts are the real cause of village splits. Hence differences must be settled immediately if the village is to persist, because if they last too long one of the aggrieved parties is sure to start using sorcery against its opponents. Those who do move away, go to a distant place because they believe that sorcery operates only where there is social interaction. But the fear of sorcery on the other hand is just as strong a force in maintaining the physical unity of the village. It is while the migration is being planned that sorcery is most likely to be used. This is particularly so if the village break is taking the form of a lineage split. This happened, for example, in Lupunje village.

Kalambo, the sister's son of Lupunje, wanted to leave the village and had gone to seek a suitable site. When he returned he found that

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culties are settled by the marriage sureties [1] who only report to him after the affair is settled. In disputes of unusual gravity, the headman may call in unrelated persons [2] to arbitrate, but he himself must be present.

His own behaviour is expected to be exemplary. Any deviation from the norm is likely to be strictly censured, not only by his own villagers, but also by other village headmen, who may say, 'Important men do not behave in this way.' A man who had an argument with his sister's son was told this. He had taken the dispute to a neighbouring headman who decided against the village headman and rebuked him for behaving in a way not consonant with his position. Village headmen should be above squabbling with their villagers. A village headman who was also a leech had virtually raped a woman whom he was treating. He tried to maintain this was part of the treatment. Her matrilineal relatives reported the matter to the headman of her village and he brought the errant headman in front of the chief who said, 'You are wrong to do this when you are an important man. You are a big man and you act as a commoner does. You ought to be able to show the commoners how to behave.' He was made to pay a compensation of £2 10s. and fined 10s. Had he been a commoner he would have been made to pay a compensation of only 30s.

The ultimate sanction to which all headmen are subject, is that their people will leave them if they behave badly. This was the fate of Cikumba.

In 1944 Cikumba had a village of about 30 huts. The son of the first Cikumba, Meya, had two wives who were living virilocally in Cikumba's village. Meya had enlisted in the army. While he was away, Cikumba, the village headman who was Meya's father's sister's son (though he called him 'father' because of positional succession), started taking Meya's two wives to beer drinks. Meya's sister one day asked Cikumba about his behaviour, but he only said that Meya could not do anything as he was far away. Things had gone too far, however, when one morning he was seen coming out of the

[1] The representative of a spouse in all affairs arising from conjugal relationships. They are usually senior matrilineal relatives. See Chap. VI, pp. 176–7. Their rôle is discussed fully in *Marriage among the Machinga Yao of Southern Nyasaland*.

[2] *Mundu juumpambali*, i.e. a person from outside.

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hut of one of Meya's wives. Meya's sister wrote a letter to tell him of this and he replied that he could do nothing until he returned. In 1946, Meya returned to be demobilised. The third night after his return he questioned his wives about their fidelity during his absence. They at first held out against him but before long he intimidated them into admitting that they had slept with the village headman. Meya now went to complain to Mapata, who was Cikumba's perpetual mother's brother, and he said that he would come to the village the next day.

When Mapata came he confronted Cikumba with the accusation. Cikumba denied it until Mapata called the women. When they confessed Cikumba was forced to admit his guilt. Mapata now decided to call in an arbitrator, Isa, an important but unrelated headman who lived close at hand. Isa said he would come the following day when the matter could be thrashed out. When Isa and Mapata came they asked the women about the affair in public. They admitted the charge and Cikumba did not deny it. Isa then remonstrated with him for being a bad man and said that he was ashamed to hear about it. Cikumba had to pay £6 10s. to the injured man, Meya, who, however, refused to take it. He argued that Cikumba ought to have behaved as a father to him. But Cikumba had not. He, Meya, could not remain living in the village because his wives would be as Cikumba's wives. Isa said that he could not object because Cikumba had caused the trouble and had broken the village himself. How could he complain? Meya took two-thirds of the huts in the village away with him.

The Headman as a Representative of a Corporate Group

The headman is not only responsible for keeping the peace between the members of his village, but he is also supposed to control his members in their relationships with other villages. If members take corporate action against other villages, even if they do so without the consent of the headman, the chief will consider the village headman responsible. This was brought out clearly in the relationships between Cikoja, Mapata and Masimbo in Chiwalo's section.

Cikoja and Mapata are two of the more important headmen in Chiwalo's section. Masimbo is a minor village headman who lives in Mapata's village area. The quarrel arose over the question of fishing rights in a small pool lying between the two main villages. This pool was excavated by Cikoja and his villagers in 1924 during

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

When a villager died in pre-White days, the hut and personal effects were destroyed. Nowadays, with the improving type of dwelling, which frequently includes well-timbered doors and glass-windows, huts are treated with medicine to cleanse them of the harmful effects of the death and they are used again. But all houses must be repaired continually if they are to remain habitable. Eventually most houses fall beyond repair and new houses must be built. The women pull the poles out of the ground and use them for firewood and the site is planted with pumpkins or maize by the nearest relative.[1] A new hut site is then chosen according to the wishes of the owners. As a rule outsiders are neutral about this, and a village member selects a site in accordance with his or her social position in the village. The women still stay near their mother, but they may build on the outside fringe of a group of huts. When the mother's house collapses she may in turn build her hut on the outside fringe of the group near her daughter's hut. In this way the spatial distribution of the huts gradually comes to reflect the segmentation of the lineage.

As the woman's daughter's children grow up and marry, the woman's son persuades his wife's relatives to allow him to take his wife to live in his home village. If he is a polygynist he usually takes the senior wife, but he may take the other or others as well. His own daughters now marry uxorilocally in the village if their mother is still alive. If the parents live long enough their daughter's daughters in turn marry and build their huts there. A crisis comes when either the man or his wife dies. The children have to decide whether to stay where they are or to move back to their own matrilineal village. If they do stay at their father's village they form the nucleus of a patrilaterally-linked group. As they grow old[er] the senior male of their matrilineage may come to live wit[h] [th]em. Through the years while this internal differentiation is developing within the village, the huts are decaying and being rebuilt. While new hut sites are being selected the physical form of the village is reflecting the continuing social differentiation.

At the same time gardens are being planted and crops reaped each year. The soil in the first garden sites has probably been depleted already and is either lying fallow or is under cassava.

[1] Usually the same-heir of a woman, i.e. her daughter's daughter.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

As garden land becomes scarcer, members of the village have probably approached patrilateral or affinal kinsmen in other villages for personal grants of land. The lands immediately surrounding the village have long since become depleted and crops will only thrive on lands some miles away; then the village moves its site. How long it will be before this becomes necessary, depends on the fertility of the soil. Most villages must move eventually. When they do they may move a few hundred yards only, or on the other hand, they may select a site thirty to forty miles away. Whether the site is far or near, the migration is not a mass movement of the village as I have so far assumed for the purposes of analysis. As a rule a few villagers, including the headman, move first. The headman may be there a year or more before the second lot of villagers move. They usually move in sorority-groups so that when they build at the new site they place their huts in sections. Thus, the internal social organization of the village is reflected in the same way as before. The whole move may take three or four years before it is completed.

This process of development of the village and its gradual and continual reformation is sometimes hastened by the conflicts that appear within it. I have from time to time mentioned various conflicts that have led to the split of a village and the subsequent migration of one of its sections. The new section sets up a small hamlet in a distant locality, especially if the reason for its secession was sorcery. Here the general process of evolution is started anew. Its parent village, however, is strengthened by the migration since the dissident elements have left it. It continues to carry on its existence and to throw off other villages from time to time.

The number of villages, in the area I studied, is increasing with the increase of population, but the average size of each village remains constant and appears to have done so for many years.[1] But at the same time some villages as entities are disappearing while new ones are being formed. A few new villages become resorbed by their parent villages when for some reason they cannot continue their separate existence. Other villages fragment and do not split. The individual village members leave the village and go their separate ways. Very frequently when

[1] See the argument in Chap. II, p. 40.